

## Arizona Department of Child Safety

### Special Audit—Investigations of Noncriminal Child Abuse and Neglect Reports

Department did not always inform individuals under noncriminal investigation of their rights and/or specific allegations against them in writing or timely complete and/or properly document some key investigative activities, which could negatively impact children and families

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#### Audit purpose

To determine whether the Department investigated noncriminal child abuse and neglect reports it received in fiscal year 2024 as required by statute and Department policy.<sup>1</sup>

#### Key findings

- ▶ Independent child welfare expert's review found Department policies and procedures for conducting investigations of allegations of child abuse and neglect include practices that support accountability, child safety, and transparent decision-making.
- ▶ Department made/attempted initial contact with alleged child victims within time frames required by its policies for 97% of all fiscal year 2024 noncriminal reports.
- ▶ Department did not always inform individuals under noncriminal investigation of their rights and/or the specific allegations against them in writing as required by statute and its policy, risking it being unable to demonstrate it did not violate individuals' rights and potentially hindering individuals' understanding of their rights and specific allegations against them.
- ▶ Department did not always complete, timely complete, and/or properly document some key activities required by statute and/or its policies in noncriminal child abuse and neglect investigations, including interviewing alleged child victims, developing plans to ensure substance-exposed newborns' health and well-being, and entering investigation findings into its case management system.
- ▶ Failure to complete/document investigative activities could impact children's welfare and impede subsequent investigations and prolonged noncriminal investigations may negatively impact the long-term welfare of families and trust in the Department.

#### Key recommendations to the Department

- ▶ Inform all individuals under investigation of their statutory rights and specific allegations against them in writing, as required by statute.
- ▶ Timely complete and document key noncriminal report investigation activities.

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<sup>1</sup> The Arizona Auditor General conducted this special audit of the Department pursuant to a September 18, 2024, resolution of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee and will conduct another special audit of the Department's processes, including for initiating and conducting investigations of criminal reports of child abuse and neglect, due September 30, 2026.